

Castlemaine Naturalist

June 1995

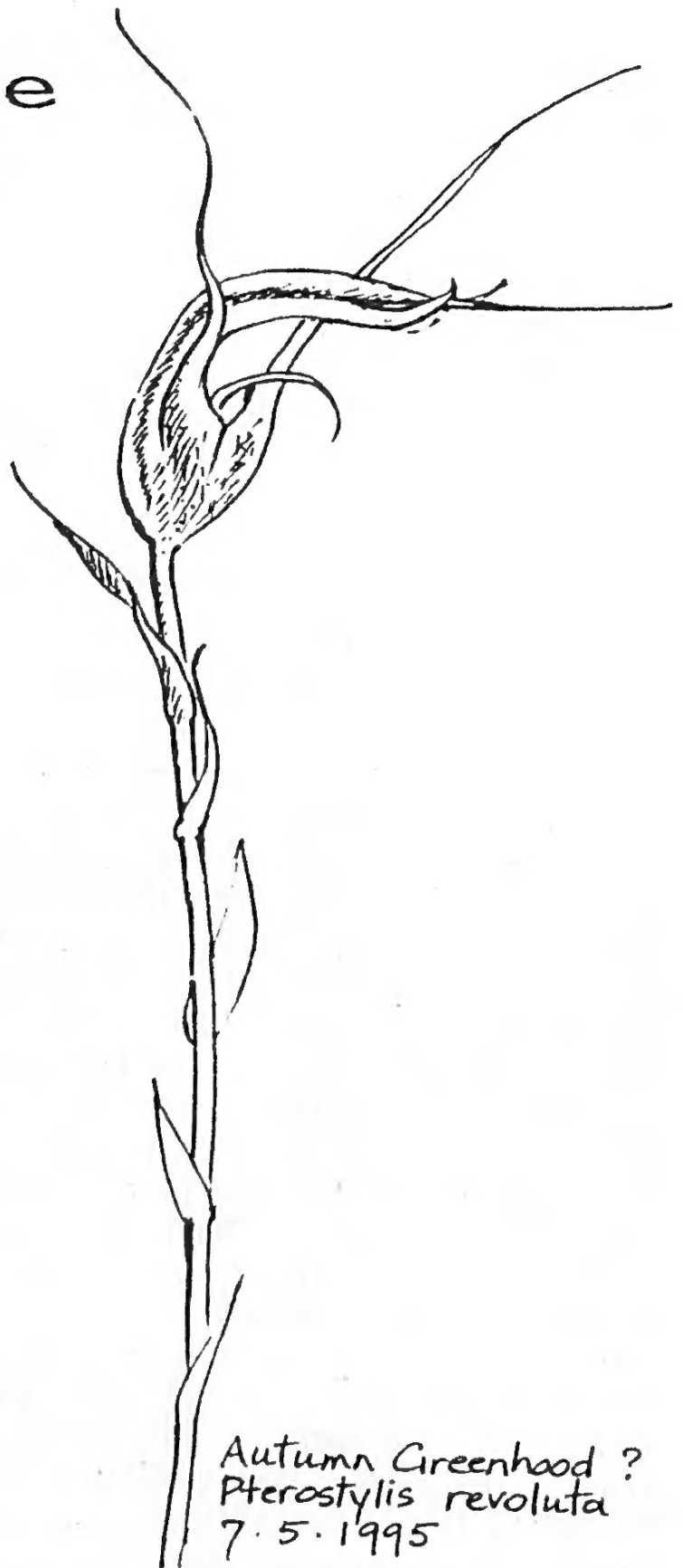
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Autumn Orchids

I have found a number of autumn orchids at Sandon. Five orchids were in flower in mid-May - Parsons Bands, Tiny Greenhood, variable Midge Orchid (*Genoplesium archeri*), another midge orchid, most likely *G. rufum*, except that it's mostly green with dark red lateral sepals and dark labellum.

Autumn greenhoods (*Pterostylis revoluta*) are also in flower, and these vary from the description in the Flora of Victoria; mine have up to 8 leaves in the rosette, rather than 3 or 4, and the flower is erect and the hood horizontal, as in my drawing.

I am sending details to the Herbarium.



Autumn Greenhood ?
Pterostylis revoluta
7.5.1995

Susanna Starr

Birds at 61 Hunter Street, May '95

The Mistletoe Birds have been busy establishing future food supplies in our back garden. Healthy new specimens of the Wire-leaf Mistletoe have appeared on a Cootamundra wattle, and nearby "Black locust" tree.

Eastern Spinebills are feasting on the first blooms of the *Grevillia rosmarinifolia*, and the New Holland Honeyeaters have added the Loquat blossoms to their diet of banksias.

For two weeks a flock of Pied Currawongs called constantly from the bush at the rear of our property, and also in the garden at "Buda" - particularly when rain threatened.

Crimson Rosellas, Magpies, and Kookaburras, ravens Galahs, Red Wattlebirds and a pair of Blackbirds continue to come and go. Striated Thornbills and Silvereyes made most use of the bath this month.

We have our share of Sparrows as usual, and after a welcome absence, a flock of Starlings have appeared again in our garden.

S. Parnaby.

Kangaroos on Our Land

Kangaroos may be a protected species, but they hardly seem an endangered one in the Sandon area. Our local Eastern Greys (*Macropus giganteus*) do well on pasture land, particularly since the decline in sheep grazing. As holders of a 16ha block of part light forest part grassland, we see them in numbers, up to 15 or so at a time. The recent drought has brought them in greater numbers. Adjoining pasture land has been well stripped off by even the reduced sheep population, and our own ungrazed acres have become the more inviting. The density of kangaroo droppings rivals the sheep droppings on any farmer's block. Are kangaroos a problem?. Not really, though we think they take foliage from some taller shrubs, like *Daviasias*, which we cherish. This property is, after all, dedicated to wild life - theres a notice which says so - and one shouldn't pick and choose about the Order of Things.

Since Kangaroos live here, it follows that they must sometimes die here. Over the years I have seen two deaths from fence-entanglement (a hind leg caught, the animal discovered too late), one drowning, one broken back on a neighbour's land. Recently we found a male lying in our lower paddock, nursing an injured leg. Was this one to be added to the mortality list? When approached, it got up and hopped away awkwardly, the left leg splayed out and seeming to be useless, then tripped, spun over and collapsed. It looked back at us fearfully; we looked at it worriedly. Common sense would indicate destruction. A broken leg in an adult generally cannot be set; if set, it will probably break again. Serious injury means that the animal cannot forage; if it cannot forage, it will die. Upon seeking advise from some experienced locals, I was advised in broad terms that I should call on someone put down the kangaroo, or put it down myself. Strictly speaking, an unauthorised person is committing a crime in killing any protected fauna - obviously. However, in a case of necessity, the matter will not be pursued.

I was caught between calling on someone to travel 30 km or so to

solve a problem I felt I should solve myself, or perhaps messing up the whole operation. I possess a .22 rifle, purchased to kill rabbits. But so far I have used it only for some brief target practice. No rabbit, or any other animal, has ever died under a hail of my bullets. What if I attempted an execution, and merely maimed my target further - turning an unhappy situation into a tragic one? As so often with difficult decisions, I opted for delay. After one approach, during which the Kangaroo got up well before I was in range, and flopped down somewhere else, I gave up for that day. Obviously its own vote was not in favour of execution. I decided that, given another day or two of life, it would either deteriorate, in which case appropriate action would be obvious, or it would, perhaps, improve. After all, its leg could not have been outright broken; it was showing itself too mobile for that. Even a dislocated hip seemed unlikely since it seemed ready enough to lie down on either side

So what happened? After about three days during which it seemed not to move from one spot, unless I approached it, it began to move about voluntarily, and must have been foraging. It disappeared from the lower paddock. When last seen, days later, it was on the next-door property, moving awkwardly still, but well enough to put distance rapidly between it and me. It knows a killer when it sees one.

I don't know what this story proves. Maybe it is some kind of argument in favour of procrastination. But this is what the land-holder should do on finding injured wild life; if the injury is not clearly fatal or irremediable, contact the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, or a conscientious veterinarian. A veterinarian will generally treat, or put down if necessary, any injured wild animals, free of charge. He or she will visit a property if need be. Seek advice, and be sure of what you are doing. You may be justified in destroying a large animal if there is obviously no choice.

Bob Webb.

Observations for May

- * Goat Moths seen in numbers at Sandon after the rain. R.W.
- * Fungi in remarkable quantities at Sutton Grange. M.H.
- * Seemingly dead eucalypts on the north side of Mt Alexander are sprouting profusely. J.H.
- * Blue-tongue Lizard seen in Kennedy Street Garden, 10/5. B.M.
- * Eastern Spinebills have been seen in many locations. M.W., K.T., S.P. R.M.
- * New Holland Honeyeaters in Campbell St. garden. K.T.
- * Silvereyes are opening persisimons too feed, but the blackbirds just wait until they are open and take over. The Pied Currawongs just take the lot! K.T.
- * Weebills at North Castlemaine. R.M.

* A Wedgetailed Eagle was seen low over the Newstead/ Welshmans Reef road. C.M.

Sandon Birds, April 1995

White-faced Heron	Buff-rumped,
Pacific Black Duck	Yellow-rumped,
Masked Lapwing	Yellow and
Galah	Striated Thornbills
Long-billed Corella	Varied Sitella
Crimson Rosella	White-throated Tree-creeper
Eastern Rosella	Brown Tree-creeper
Kookaburra	Red Wattlebird
Welcome Swallow	White-eared,
Flame Robin (13/4)	Yellow-tufted
Scarlet Robin	Fuscous,
Eastern Yellow Robin	White-plumed,
Jacky Winter	Black-chinned,
Golden Whistler	Brown-headed and
Grey Shrike-thrush	White-naped Honeyeaters
Restless Flycatcher	Silvereye
Grey Fantail	Red-browed Firetail
Willie Wagtail	White-winged Cjhouse
White-browed Babbler	Australian Magpie-lark
Wrens	Magpie
Speckled Warbler	Grey Currawong
Weebill	Australian Raven
Brown,	

Susanna Starr

Dargo and the Freda Treasure Tree Reserve

In early April after lunching at Bright and admiring the autumn colours, our bush walking group drove on to Harrietville and along the Hotham road to a turn off at the Mt Saint Bernard area, and a sign which indicated "Dargo 72 km". We followed the steep winding gravel road down to Dargo High Plains - with a light powdering of snow at intervals, and Flame Robins numerous along the way.

During a coffee break at roadside gates leading to the summer home of the Treasure family (of "Mountain Cattlemen" fame) we were impressed by the surrounding Snow Gum forests and abundant wildflowers.

As we continued the descent towards Dargo through Alpine Ash, we came to an area which was outstanding. With immense towering trees and ancient tree ferns in the dense understory, it appeared never to have been logged or "managed", and roadside signs to the effect that this was the "Freda Treasure Tree Reserve" confirmed this possibility.

There was no opportunity to stop and explore at the time, but one of the local DCNR rangers kindly supplied the following information in regard to Freda and the Reserve.

She was one of the third generation of the Treasure family to engage in cattle grazing on the High Plains, and apart from a few years away at school, she lived her whole life in tune with the seasons and the shifting of cattle. She loved the bush, and all the moods of the mountains. She was a superb horsewoman and manager of stock, and was at all times a true conservationist.

Freda was responsible for the reservation of these sections of the bush at Mt Ewan and Spring Hill junction.

Before logging commenced in 1980, she appealed to the Avon Shire and to the Minister for Forests (Sir Albert Lind) for protection of the giant Wooley Butts and tree ferns past which she had ridden since she was a child.

It was not until after her death in April 1988 that there was any official recognition of the reserve, and a memorial stone was erected by the Shire of Avon and the Mountain Cattlemens' Association.

S. Parnaby.

Bendigo Campout (WVFNCA AND VFNCA)

October 6, 7 and 8

at Koolamurt Scout Camp, on the Sedgewick road.

Accommodation - Koolamurt - 58 Bunkhouse beds. Suppers, Sat evening meal and Sunday lunch provided. You need to provide the rest. The camp is only 25 - 30 minutes travelling time through North Harcourt and Sedgewick for us.

A deposit of \$20 is required to ensure you are registered for the
Campout

Please let Jane Cleary (Sec. Bendigo F.N.C., P.O. Box 396 Bendigo 3450) know NOW if you require accommodation
at Koolamurt

Details of activities will be notified with the booking forms to be sent out in July.

Great dividing Trail Public Walks

Sun. Aug 13 Nolans Loop. About 15 km though the headwaters of the Lerderderg River.

Meet at the Garden of St Erth, Blackwood, 9.30 am. Leader is Pat Conroy.

Sat. Sept 23 Sawpit Gully to Vaughan . About 16 km of fairly easy walking through some little known gold diggings including Sebastopol and Stones and Sailors Gullies.

Meet at the Junction of Midland Highway and Sawpit Gully Road, 7 km north of Daylesford, between Mt Franklin turnoff and the Hepburn-dry Diggings turnoff, at 9.30am. Easy to medium walking. Leader is Doug Ralph.

New books

SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

The first volume of the encyclopaedia was published in 1980, and was to have been the first of a three volume set. However, many requests to the authors asked that the encyclopaedia be comprehensive, and the size of the set has increased accordingly. The most recent volume is volume 6, and it covers K-M. There are obviously a few more volumes to come.

The encyclopaedia covers plants suitable for cultivation, and is a "must" purchase for anyone interested in growing native species. The books really are comprehensive, and contain a wealth of information, and are interestingly written. A problem is the price, which is now more than \$100 per volume.

Another problem with a set such as this is that it can become out of date. Botanical research often means name changes. This can make it difficult to find a plant in the encyclopaedia. In some cases, a plant late in the alphabet can be renamed. For example, the *Oreocaulis* genus has been renamed *Alloxylon*, with obvious problems for the authors of the encyclopaedia. New plants are being found, and named, and new varieties are being introduced to cultivation.

The supplement is an attempt to overcome some of these problems. It is in loose-leaf form, and includes a common-name index for plants so far described, and additions to earlier volumes. Another section lists name changes since the earlier volumes were produced.

The first supplement costs about \$40. Later additions will not include the binder, and are expected to be about \$20 each. If you have already purchased the encyclopaedia volumes, the supplement is well worth considering.

E.P.

CFNC BOOKLET REVISION

The Club's booklet "Geological Features of the Castlemaine District" has been revised and reprinted. Copies can be obtained from the town library or at meetings. Cost is 50 cents.

Note The second volume of "Flora of Victoria" is now in the local Library.

B.O.C. Anzac Weekend Camp

A very enjoyable camp was held recently over the Anzac Day weekend, Friday to Wednesday, April 21-26. on private property about 15 km south of St Arnaud. About 20 Birdos attended which everyone agreed was an ideal number as the group remained cohesive and all fitted comfortably around a cosy camp fire. The property was at the extremity of a tongue of private land which extended into the heart of the St Arnaud state forest and was surrounded on three sides by the forest.

In the forest the Grey Box was flowering profusely and attracting huge flocks of lorikeets and honeyeaters, particularly Musk Lorikeets and Fuscous Honeyeaters, but also seen were Little and Purple-crowned lorikeets, and Honeyeaters included Yellow-faced, Yellow-tufted, Yellow-plumed, White-plumed, Black-chinned, Brown-headed, White-naped, New Holland and Eastern Spinebill.

The camp itself was set up in a field where young trees were being allowed to take over, surrounded by mature trees lining the road and a creek. Frequent visitors in camp were Wrens, Diamond Firetails, Whiteface, Hooded Robins, Restless Flycatchers and Jacky Winter.

Some of the highlights included:-

- # the 82 different birds seen during the camp
- # the open paddock near the house where many birds were seen in the open, including the Crested Bellbird, dozens of White-browed Babblers, Firetails, Brown Treecreepers, Wrens and Richards Pipit.
- # Five Wedge-tailed Eagles taking flight from a carcass as we approached.
- # The visit one evening of some Swift Parrots which perched for us in the high branches lit by the last rays of the setting sun, then a prolonged opportunity for observation next morning as they remained in a tree near a waterhole.
- # The discovery of a pair of Powerful Owls in the St Arnaud School Pine plantation.
- # The sighting of a Regent Parrot as we were leaving the owls.

Apart from the congenial company, these camps are a great opportunity to pick up tips on field identification from experienced people. I will certainly be making an effort to attend the next camp which will probably be held in September

G.B.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

General Meetings are held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street. .

Fri June 9 The Campaspe River Catchment. 8pm Cont. Education. Speaker is Ern Perkins.

Sat June 10 Reservoirs on the Coliban River. Take warm clothing, binoculars, small change for entry into some reservoirs. BBQ lunch. BYO food and drinks. Leave 27 Doveton St. at 10.30am.

Wed June 14 Action Plan Workshop, sponsored by the Victorian Conservation Trust. To be held in the Training Room, Old Shool of Mines, 27 Lyttleton St, Castlemaine, from 9 am to 1 pm. The purpose of the workshop is to establish the nature conservation priorities for the Castlemaine area. Lunch afterwards, but for catering purposes Elvyne Hogan, ph. 353344, would appreciate notice that you will attend by Fri June 9.

Thur June 15. U3A/FNC Bird Outing. Meet at Cont. Ed. car park 9.30am. Leader is C. Morris.

Fri. July 14 Some District Birds Birds, and club members taking part, are - Rufous Whistler, G. Broadway; Babblers, C. Morris; Pardalotes, M. Oliver; Galahs, R. Mills; Grey Shrike-thrush, M. Willis; Wrens, M. Hunter.

Sat July 15 Mc Kittericks Road. Birdwatching. Leader is C. Morris.

Fri Aug. 11 Antarctica. Speaker is John Bradfield.

Fri Sept Conservation of Grassy Woodlands . Speaker is Elvyne Hogan.

Sat. Sept. 23 Excursion to Castlemaine by the Botany Group of Field Naturalists Club of Victoria.

Fri. Oct 13 "Albatrosses" and "Flora of the Royal Botanic Gardens". Speaker is Dr Phillip Moors.

Sat Oct 14 Excursion with Maryborough F.N.C. to Muckleford and Smiths Reef. Leaving 27 Doveton St., Castlemaine at 11 am. Leader, E. Perkins.

Sat. Nov. 4 at 10am. Kalimna Walk with the Gardens Festival.

Fri. Nov 10 Pond Life. Speaker is Alan Reid.

Committee: C. Morris (Pres.), G. Broadway (V.P.), M. Willis (Sec.), B. Envall (Treas.), K. Turner (Prog.), R.Mills (P.O. & N/L Ed.), E. Perkins, M. Oliver, S. Parnaby, K. Meehan, M. Hunter, S. Bruton, B. Maund.

Meetings:-

General - Second Friday every month (except Jan) at Continuing Education, Templeton St. at 8 pm.

Business - Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. All Members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions - 1995

. Ordinary Membership: Single \$14, Family \$20

Pensioner/Student: Single \$10, Family \$16. Supporting: \$25

Newsletter posted: Membership + \$6.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.
P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.